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ABSTRACT

Educators sometimes fail to adequately bring about school community collaboration. To do so, cooperative policy adjustments must be made, such as the supportive network created in the Dallas "Adopt-a-School" Program. Too, implementation adjustments must be made in the development of an action-learning program such as the flexible scheduling systems in the Metro-Atlanta Skills Center and the Program of Education and Career Exploration in Atlanta, Georgia. Programs such as these are created through policy adjustments that reflect the urban school district's commitment to the restoration of relevance in the education of American youth. Characteristics of 11 other programs are briefly listed in the paper. (Author/JM)

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Alternate Learning: Sharing Innovative Programs and Practices

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Alternate Learning: Sharing Innovative Programs and Practices

"In recent years we have discovered that a more significant range of options can be provided through alternative schools and programs that break away from the educational lockstep, erase artificial barriers between school and community, and give students a new sense of responsibility for their own education."

Francis S. Chase

This perspective on alternative learning was expressed by Dr. Francis S. Chase in a recent article entitled "The Regeneration of Public Education in Our Cities." The article reveals some of the results of a study on urban education sponsored by the Council of Great City Schools, N.I.E. and the Spencer Foundation. The content of this paper enlarges upon the Urban Education Studies, the K-12 Urban Career Education Project, and other observations gleaned from numerous visits to schools and educational settings in urban areas.

David K. Cohen observed in "Reforming School Politics" that "the statutes of government and chapters in textbooks tell us that education is mostly controlled by citizens through democratic legislative bodies at the state and local levels, in fact it is controlled in more and more respects by public and private agencies whose power, while manifest at all levels of government, is increasingly national in character." We might assume in light of the technology of western nations and the multinationals that this power, indeed, has an international character. Therefore, it makes sense and exemplifies good judgement to actively involve your community in the delivery of educational programs. William Smith, Director of the Teacher Corp in an

address on "Youth Advocacy" lamented about the reluctant use of community resources:

"The basic premise is that the school belongs to the community (the constitution bestows this right on the states, and the states vest some of their rights with local school districts), but we (educators) sometimes fail to develop strategies to bring the school to the community or the community to the school."

This basic premise provides the focus for the discussion on action learning, community involvement and their relationship to alternative course offerings in secondary schools. Since this premise presupposes a climate of collaboration between the school(s) and community entities, steps must be taken at the outset to account for enabling adjustments. These adjustments can be accommodated in a pre-planning process that includes all participants and examines the following:

Policy Adjustments

A significant facet of the support system is the cooperatively derived policies of each entity. Initially, governing boards of the schools and the community must legitimize the support system through their respective policy-making apparatus. These separate policy statements are used to undergird the action policy-making process of the mutual support system. Evidence of policy adjustments that served to create and sustain partnerships between the schools and the community were observed in several school districts. As an example the adopt-a-school program in the Dallas Independent School District featured institutional policy adjustments. The board of education's responsibility as outlined in the 1976 court order for school desegregation established community partnerships. Concomitantly,

the various sectors of the community were organized into a supportive network. The board by their acceptance of the court mandate and the community through cooperative agreement of the participating sectors embraced the adopt-a-school program. The impetus from these policy adjustments enabled 173 schools to be adopted and supported during the 1977-78 school year.

The school-community linkages set in motion by this policy made the adopt-a-school program a valuable teaching and learning supplement for the students. Financial support, tutoring assistance, resource speakers, study tours, innovative action-learning innovations, and unprecedented community involvement were made possible through policy recognition of a mutual support system in Dallas, Texas.

Implementation Adjustments

Just as mutual acceptance by the school district and the community is important to the development of a meaningful action-learning program, a strong administrative commitment is required to produce a favorable climate for implementation. The nature of many activities in action-learning require alterations in policy so that the programs can be implemented.

The Atlanta, Georgia public schools demonstrated their commitment to the concept of action-learning through excellent programs such as the Metro-Atlanta Skills Center and the Program of Education and Career Exploration (PECE). The success of these programs can be traced in part to the district's support of unique implementation strategies.

The PECE program is directed toward students in the middle school grades. It provides career exploration infused with Mathematics, Social Studies and

Language Arts. The unique presentation observed at one school was attributed to flexible scheduling of students, team teaching, and the freedom building administrators were given in the implementation of the program.

The Metro-Atlanta Skills Center provides student with unusal access: open-entry and open-exit. This latitude in meeting individual student needs was made possible through special implementing policies and procedures of the school district.

In the Dallas Independent School District many critical teaching positions requiring skilled personnel, not necessarily cerified as teachers, have been filled by individuals with work experience in a specific career area. These personnel have added a dimension to action learning that in many instances the classroom teacher cannot. The school district has been able to meet student needs by devising an implementation policy supported by teacher groups, local community groups and the state education agency.

New dimensions such as those in Atlanta, Georgia and Dallas, Texas are being brought about through policy adjustments which reflects the urban school district's commitment to the restoration of relevance in the education of American youth. Their unique partnerships with the economic community was realized through continuous interaction and the pressing need for a truly educated citizenry.

Summary

The mutual support systems observed were the brain thrusts of educational leaders with an awareness of community involvement possibilities. While major policy alterations in the area of scheduling and utilizing resource persons were key school ingredients, the economic community's willingness

to relax the profit-making motive as well as work schedules was equally crucial. The enabling adjustments discussed offer major policy considerations that were encountered by the schools and community. When the policy considerations were derived cooperatively, the success of the mutual support system in urban school districts was guaranteed.

The alternate learning and innovative programs and practices supporting my contentions are described herein for your consideration:

Toledo, Ohio (Secondary students - Options)

Skill Centers

1. Medical & Health Services - Libbey
2. Commerce & International Trade - Rogers
3. Computer Technology & Automated Services - Start
4. Energy & Power - Woodward
5. Private Enterprise & Service Technology - Devilbiss
6. Communications & The Performing Arts - Schott
7. Construction - Waite
8. Aircraft Frame, Aircraft Power & Avionics - Aviation Center
9. Natural Resources, Agriculture Mechanics, Animal Care, Floriculture, and Landscaping - Agriculture Center

Buffalo, New York

Buffalo Alternative High School Satellite

1. Provides a comprehensive high school education for high-risk secondary students. This program includes individual academic work and work-study experiences at 9 regional satellites.

   Target population: Unserved handicapped, truants, dropouts, adjudicated youth, suspended youth. (361)

   cost: $723,072 $2,004.32 per student

St. Louis, Missouri

Off-Campus Work-Study Programs (8 years of operation)

Target population: 12th graders of general high school population (232)

description: Program designed to provide students with paid work experience on company's site while receiving job related instruction in academic areas.

objective: Employment upon graduation and/or continued education in area of training.

funding source: district $150,000

vocational reimbursements $28,000

community involvement: 11 non-educational entities, Ralston Purina, Blue Cross, U. S. Army & Navy, Federal Reserve Bank, Bank of St. Louis, Southwestern Bell, Church's Fried Chicken, etc.

Atlanta, Georgia

Project Propinquity (4 years of operation)

Target population: 15 year old youth identified by high school administrators on the basis of need in area of high absenteeism, low achievement levels, and social services (120)

description: Project provides a support system for adolescents which will allow each student to acquire the self-sustaining knowledge and skills which reduce the need for social welfare dependency.

objective: Through diagnosis, tutoring, counseling, parent involvement, and extra - curricular activities at the school site deliver social services to improve attitudes toward school and learning.

funding source: state $216,000

(Lilly Foundation) private $24,000

community involvement: Exodus, Inc., City of Atlanta, Fulton County, LEAA, Georgia State Crime Commission.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Career Specialty Program

Target Population: 11th & 12th graders of general high school population

description: Program is aimed at the creation of multiple opportunities for career selection and training. Students are provided an opportunity to explore a variety of careers within the specialty selected. Some of the specialties feature OJT, others simulate the job environment in the classroom with supplementary observations in the world of work. The specialties are as follows:

1. Visual & Performing Arts
2. Applied Technology (Plastics, Air Conditioning, and Chemical Technology)
3. Marketing and Business Communications
4. Small Business Management
5. Finance & Commerce
6. Communications & Media
7. Tourism, Food Service and Recreation
8. Computer Data Processing
9. Law, Law Enforcement & Protective Services
10. Government & Community Services

Funding source: district

state

community involvement: numerous businesses, corporations and agencies

Philadephia, Pennsylvania

Penn Treaty - "Better Education through Service and Training" (BEST)

Target population: 9th grade girls who have had a history of poor achievement, absenteeism, etc. (80)

description: Program provides basic skills instruction three days per week, with two days of voluntary service. Features self contained classes, highly structured formal classes, and extensive use of classroom aides

funding source: district $74,000
federal $75,500

community involvement: 3 local hospitals

Philadephia

Distributive Education - Warehousing

Target population: 12th graders classified as disadvantaged (60) Olney High School

description: Program provides compensation for students working in the warehouse at the U. S. Naval Installation (O.J.T.) Academic instruction is given half of the day at the government facility. The other half day is spent working in various warehousing activities.

funding source: federal $12,286
district teacher's salary

community involvement: U. S. military

Portland Oregon

Emergency Home Repair Program

Target population: Potential dropouts who meet CETA (Title III) economic/ academic guidelines (146)

description: This program is a home rehabilitation training program offered to Portland youth through a combination of CETA Titles I, II, and VI dollars as well as Housing and Community Development Act funds. The student spends part time in the classroom and part time on the work site where they perform a variety of jobs from simple repairs to winterization and major renovation of substandard homes.

funding source: district $17,000 (adm. salary)
federal $64,563

community involvement: Six agencies (carpentry, cement masonry, brick layers, unions, city of Portland & Portland Development Commission) support this paid job training and free emergency home repairs for elderly poor. Homes are restored to meet the City Building Code

New York, New York

Satellite Academies

Target population: Program is directed to reach minority male and female secondary students who are under achieving, dropouts and potential dropouts. (680)

description: Students are exposed to pre-job training, job skills training and academic foundations for educational and career advancement. This includes placement and training for entry level jobs in Business and Health careers. Another feature is the development of decision-making skills by students which enables them to make

informed career choices in the future as well as the present.

funding source: district $658,000
federal $120,000
foundation $6,000

community involvement: numerous businesses, health care centers, and hospitals.

New York City

Cooperative Education Program

Target population: 11th and 12th graders in 84 participating high schools (4,566).

description: Program provides students with paid job opportunities in the community where they reside. Cooperative plans include alternate weeks and part time daily programs. Under the alternate week plan, 11th and 12th year students are employed in pairs. They are designated either "A" or "B" students. During the "A" students work week, the "B" student attends schools and vice versa.

funding source: district $130,705
state $241,344

community involvement: Over 400 businesses and agencies

Dallas, Texas

Project In/Vest (Insurance Vocational Education Student Training) Thomas Jefferson High School

Target population: selected 11th & 12th graders interested in business and office careers

description: The project is a realistic program using a simulated office environment to teach baric business fundamentals, integrated office skills and office procedures, with automobile insurance as the vehicle.

objective: To build skills for job-bound and/or college enabling them to obtain employment in the insurance industry upon graduation.

funding source: district, in kind

private $10,000

community involvement: Dallas Association of Insurance Agents

"And this we do in the only way open to us: by showing what humanity has been and has made and has thought. This is how people have become more than what they are, what you, the future and the hope, can feel and do and be and think."

Jacob Neusner

"To Weep with Achilles"

NOTHING LESS WILL SUFFICE.....